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MIXTEC CULTURAL VOCABULARY AND PICTORIAL WRITING

Maarten E.R.G.N. Jansen & Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez

1. *Introduction*

The language of a people is the key to its culture, including its world-view, technology, art, memory and social organisation.¹ The diachronic development of a language, and its expression in different stages of writing and literature, tells us much about the historical experiences and successive synchronic relationships of the community that uses it, from early archaeological times until today. It is not a pure immutable “essence” that we are looking for, on the contrary: it is the dynamics of development, the complex interplays of continuities, changes, creativities and internal contradictions, which are the most interesting, as they bring us in contact with the human condition of a community and its journey through time and space, its “nomadic identity” (cf. Braidotti 1994). A guideline for this interest and research endeavour is the cultural vocabulary of the people in question, which can help us to connect the present to earlier phases. This is particularly relevant in the study of the Mesoamerican cultural and linguistic heritage, which often includes ancient and colonial forms of writing and communicative visual art, as well as oral traditions. This heritage is not just a curious collection of objects and artefacts from the past, to be enjoyed or fantasized about by outsiders, but is of direct value to living descendant communities.

1. This contribution is a result from on-going research on Ñuu Dzaui (Mixtec) language and culture, being carried out at the Faculty of Archaeology and the Centre of Non-Western Studies, Leiden University, with the support of the Netherlands Foundation for Scientific Research (NWO). We gladly acknowledge here the many years of fruitful cooperation with Willem Adelaar, who has played a central role in constructing an area of expertise and research on Native American languages and cultures at Leiden University.

2. *Mixtec civilization*

The Ñuu Dzaui or Mixtec people in Southern Mexico are one of the Mesoamerican peoples that play a central role in cultural historical and linguistic research at Leiden University. Ñuu Dzaui (also pronounced Ñuu Savi, Ñuu Sau, Ñuu Davi and Ñuu Dau, according to dialect variation) means “People or Nation of the Rain”, *ñuu* being a comprehensive term for a place (town, city, country) and the people that live there, and Dzaui (in colonial orthography: Dzavui or Dzahui) is the word for “rain”, as well as the name of the Rain God (the Tlaloc of the Aztecs and Chac of the Maya). The term “Mixtec” is derived from the name the Aztecs gave to this people in their language, (Nahuatl): *mix-tecâ*, “inhabitants of the land of the clouds”.

The Mixtec land, referred to as ‘La Mixteca’ in Spanish, is located in the south of Mexico, in the western part of the State of Oaxaca and neighbouring areas of the States of Puebla and Guerrero. Ecologically this region is subdivided in three zones: 1) the Mixteca Alta, a mountainous area, mostly over 2000 meters above sea level, with a relatively cold climate, 2) the Mixteca Baja, lower but still quite mountainous, hot, dry and eroded, and 3) the Mixteca de la Costa, humid and tropical lowlands bordering on the Pacific Ocean.

The Mixtec language, Dzaha Dzaui (Sahan Savi, Sahin Sau, Daha Davi etc.) or “Language of the Rain”, is reported to be spoken at present by more than 450.000 people, most of whom, however, are over twenty-five years of age. It belongs to the Otomangue family and is a tone language.

A rich heritage of archaeological sites, monuments and visual art bears testimony to the autonomous development of Ñuu Dzaui culture from the first millennium B.C. onward till the Spanish invasion (1521). Summarizing the complex and fragmentary archaeological data, we see between approximately 500 BC and the Spanish conquest of 1521 AD the rise of a village-state culture, with impressive ceremonial centres of stone architecture (pyramids, plazas, tombs, ball-courts etc.), dispersed over the mountainous countryside, hardly known, less protected, and consequently subject to erosion and/or destruction.²

The development of a graphic register accompanies this development. Leaving aside the even more ancient rock paintings, we find in-

2. Archaeological information about Oaxaca is synthesized in *The Cloud People*, edited by Flannery and Marcus (1983) and in the monograph by Spores (2007).

scriptions of calendrical signs (fixing dates and /or the calendrical names of persons) in the Late Preclassic period (approximately 500 B.C. – A.D. 200). In the following Classic period (A.D. 200 – 900) this epigraphic record becomes more extensive, including statements about enthronements, rituals and conquests in a combination of pictorial (iconic) and hieroglyphic signs, clearly influenced by the important Zapotec capital Monte Albán in the Valley of Oaxaca.³

The archaeological and artistic hallmark of Ñuu Dzauí civilization belongs to the Postclassic (A.D. 900- 1521) and consists of a sophisticated, pregnant figurative style, used in paintings, sculpture, metallurgy and other art forms, generally synthesized under the term “Mixteca-Puebla style”, shared by many Mesoamerican peoples in that period. This same style and representational code allowed for the elaboration of pictography, or pictorial writing, an original, precise and consistent system of graphic register, which uses mainly figurative (iconic) images in combination with specific conventional signs, also figurative in appearance but more ideographic (indexical, symbolic) and/or phonetic in nature. This system was employed in a corpus of polychrome painted manuscripts made of folded strips of deerskin (codices) or large pieces of cotton cloth (*lienzos*). Only a handful of such manuscripts have survived colonial destruction; the majority is now being kept outside the Mixtec region in museums or libraries in Europe, the U.S. or Mexico City. These unique and precious testimonies of the precolonial intellectual world register historical events, religious concepts and ritual practices.

We should stress that ancient Mexican pictography was not a rudimentary stage of some development towards phonetic writing. It was developed and used during some 1500 years in the central and southern parts of Mexico. Probably the Classic metropolis of Teotihuacan played a major role in its elaboration and distribution. We can still admire many of this pictography’s fundamental conventions and stylistic aspects in the flamboyant frescoes of this archaeological site. At the same time, a phonetic writing system was developed in the Maya region (in the eastern part of Mexico, in Guatemala and Belize). The Mayas wrote hieroglyphic signs in sets of two parallel columns, top down. These hieroglyphs are generally composed of smaller signs that

3. For an overview of the development of Mixtec writing in its social context, see Jansen and Van Broekhoven (eds.) (2008).

represent syllables in the local Maya language. Pictography, in contrast, is largely independent of language and represents the information directly through figurative scenes. Although the peoples of Central and Southern Mexico were in contact with the Mayas and must have had some knowledge about that form of phonetic writing with hieroglyphic signs, they preferred to stick with their pictography. Apparently, they saw several advantages in using this system of pictorial communication, such as its intelligibility across language boundaries – indeed, many distinct languages were/are spoken in this part of Mexico. Another important advantage becomes evident when one studies the character of the languages in question: many are tone languages. For a phonetic writing system to work for them, a rather wide array of signs for syllables with different tones would have had to have been developed. But that is not all: in the tone languages words, or rather syllables, may change tone under the influence of words/syllables with other tones in the sentence melody (*sandhi*). It is quite cumbersome to develop a phonetic writing system that will adequately represent these dynamics. Also the modern alphabet is badly suited to represent this tonal aspect of a language. Pictography proved to be an excellent and easy answer.

3. *The linguistic work of the Dominican missionaries*

Products of early colonial times, but still outstanding in their extent and quality, are two major works of the Dominican Order, which after the Spanish invasion took on the evangelisation of the region: the Dzaha Dzauí grammar of Friar Antonio de los Reyes and the vocabulary compiled by Friar Francisco de Alvarado. Both were published in 1593, at the instigation of the Dominican *provincial*, Friar Gabriel de San José. On the one hand the friars followed the sixteenth century tradition of Spanish vocabularies and grammars, initiated by the humanist Antonio de Nebrija (1441-1521) who published his main work in the same year that Columbus undertook his first voyage. On the other hand, they based themselves on their own learning in practice from the speakers of Dzaha Dzauí. In this way their works are fascinating intercultural products, fruits of the interaction (and implicit dialogue) between Dominican monks and Ñuu Dzauí intellectuals during many decades in the early colonial period. The texts contain valuable references to the traditional, precolonial world and worldview, giving

terms for many items and details of the material culture and ancient technology, such as ceramics and textiles, but also of the social organisation, kinship, and religion. At the same time these works reflect how the introduction of new elements and ideas from Spain led to the creation of new expressions and neologisms. All of this, needless to say, is of crucial importance to archaeological and historical studies.

The dialect variety of Dzaha Dzauí registered by these Dominicans was that of Yucu Ndaa (Teposcolula), the *alcaldía mayor* of the Mixteca Alta and site of an impressive Dominican convent: this variety occupies a “central” position within the total dialect variability, so that its terms are very useful for etymological studies and for understanding the relationships between the different varieties of Mixtec through time. Unfortunately and ironically, in Yucu Ndaa (Teposcolula) itself, Mixtec is no longer spoken.

The works of Reyes and Alvarado are now indispensable keys for translating and understanding the corpus of colonial documents written in Dzaha Dzauí using the alphabet introduced by the Spaniards.⁴ Alvarado’s vocabulary is comparable to other famous products of monks in those days, such as the Nahuatl dictionary of Friar Alonso de Molina (1571) and the Zapotec dictionary of Friar Juan de Córdova (1578). Only the Spanish – Mixtec part was published. Recently in Leiden, however, with the help of students of modern Mixtec, we have transcribed Alvarado’s work into a data-base and so were able, after due analysis, to generate a counterpart Mixtec – Spanish dictionary.

It turns out to be relatively easy to establish the correspondences between this sixteenth century Yucu Ndaa dialect and the present-day dialects of the Mixtec language, e.g. the Sahin Sau of Ñuu Ndeya (Chalcatongo), with which we, the authors, are most familiar. The main differences are quite regular phonetic changes. Once these transformations have been performed, an impressive continuity of terms and meanings demonstrates a profound time-depth of Mixtec cultural vocabulary.

Recently we were present at the preparation of some new cooking vessels for practical use. It was interesting to watch how the vessels were bathed with water in which a lot of chalk had been dissolved and then “cooked” on the three stones (*yiyi*) above the open kitchen fire.

4. For a first index see Josserand, Jansen and Romero (1984). Examples of these documents have been published by Jansen (1994) and Terraciano (2001).

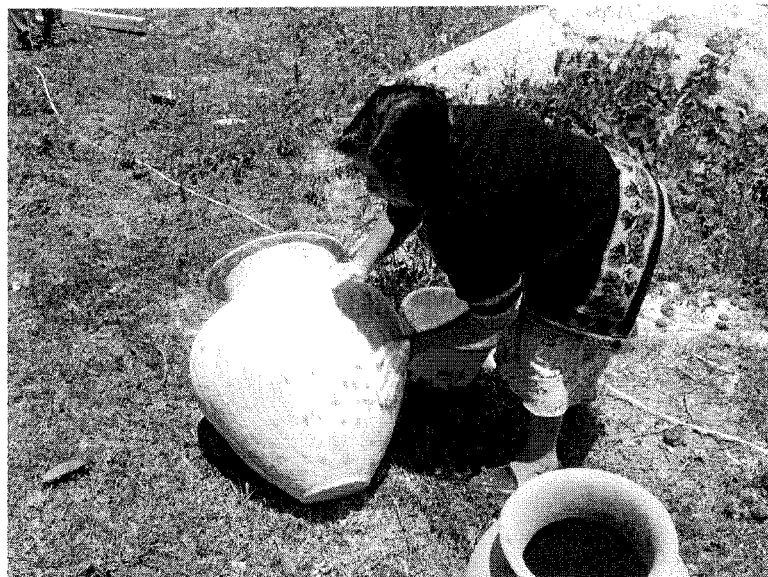


Fig. 1. Preparing (*suhni*) a vessel in Nuu Ndeya (a: bathing in chalk water)

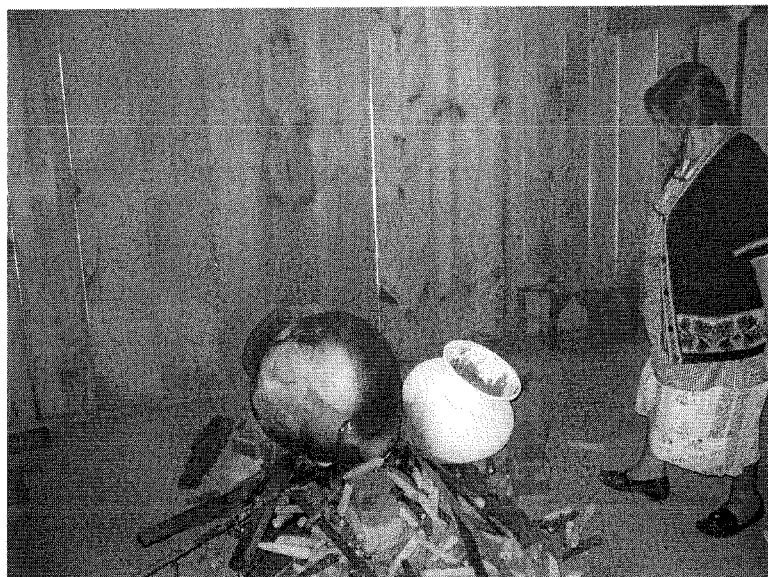


Fig. 2. Preparing (*suhni*) a vessel in Nuu Ndeya (b: cooking the vessel)

People who know the tradition referred to this action with a specific verb: *suhni*, which, however, is not known any more among many other speakers of Sahin Sau. But it is the modern form of expressions registered in the sixteenth century dictionary by Friar Francisco de Alvarado: *yodzuni*, 'to use a new vessel' (Spanish: *estrenar vasija*), and even more specific in combination with the word for the cooking vessel: *yodzunindi quedze*, 'to heat the new vessels to make them strong' (Spanish: *calentar las vasijas nuevas para que se fortifiquen*).

In Alvarado's vocabulary the verb *yodzuni(ndi)* is also used for cooking water or milk, and is even reported to have a figurative meaning: *yodzunindi huahi ñuhu*, 'to dedicate the house of God' (Spanish: *dedicar iglesia*). This is an example of how a language stores much of its cultural memory in specific terminologies and ways of expression (cf. Assmann 1992). It goes without saying that it is crucial to document and study such cultural vocabulary and the related practices and concepts, in both a diachronic and an intercultural manner.

Interestingly, Alvarado registers several terms for 'paper that the Indians used for writing' (Spanish: *papel en que escribían los indios antiguos*), which correspond to the different materials for creating pictographic manuscripts: *tutu* 'paper', *dzoo* 'cloth', i.e. lienzo) and *ñee* 'skin', i.e. deerskin). In the words for 'rough, native paper' (Spanish: *papel de estraza, o de la tiera*), i.e. bark paper or *amate*, Alvarado documents several forms: *tutu ñuhu* is indeed 'paper of the land', but *tutu ñuu dzuma* 'paper of the Colhua' refers to Central Mexico, while *tutu ñudzavui* signals the existence of locally produced 'Mixtec paper'.

A book (codex) was *ñuu ñuhu* 'sacred skin' and the man writing such a book (*tay ninataa ñee ñuhu*) was a 'historian'. References to European style books (e.g. in *libro impreso*) use the term *tutu* 'paper', as is still the case today. Logically, given the pictorial character of pre-colonial Mixtec writing, an equivalent term for the ancient book was *tacu* 'painting'.

The scenes of a codex correspond to the term of *naa ndeye*, translated as 'a memory image of the past' (Spanish: *imagen otra para memoria de lo pasado, entre indios*), and literally 'image of a dead person'. A 'line' (Spanish: *renglón*) within writing is *yuq*, a word also meaning 'furrow', connoting a linear sequence, and coinciding beautifully with the scientific term 'boustrophedon' for the "zigzag" reading order that is characteristic of the codices.

Further interesting details: an inkpot is *tiyaha tnoo* ‘a gourd of black stuff’, and a pen is *yeque taa tutu* ‘a bone for writing’, although the Spanish translation, in accordance with its own cultural practice, refers to a feather: *pluma*.

The native terms for ‘writing’ (*yotaa tutu*) and ‘reading’ (*yonacahui tutu*), which appear in Alvarado’s vocabulary must originally have referred to the writing/painting and reading of the precolonial codices. They are still in use today (*chaa tutu* and *kahu tutu* respectively), demonstrating that these arts and abilities were not introduced by the colonial invaders, but had already been developed much earlier. The verb *yotaa* ‘to write’ has a wider meaning as ‘to mark’ and was used by the monks also for ‘crossing oneself’ (Spanish: *persignarse*): *yotaa tnuni*, in which *tnuni* means ‘signal’ or ‘sign’. Similarly, *yocahui* also means ‘to count’ and was used in the context of evangelisation for ‘saying (praying) the rosary’. These semantic extensions are in accordance with the oral performance aspect of ancient pictorial writing.

As was to be expected, the painting of the figures often corresponds to figurative language. For example, in modern Ñuu Ndeya (Chalcatongo) the expression for submission is *chii shrehe* ‘to hold someone under the armpit’. Alvarado gives us *yocuvui dzahi* ‘to be (under) the armpit’ as expression for being subdued (Spanish: *vencido ser*). Indeed we find in Codex Añute (Selden), p. 12-I, a pictorial scene of battle and conquest in which a Mixtec ruler holds a Nahuatl warrior under his arm.

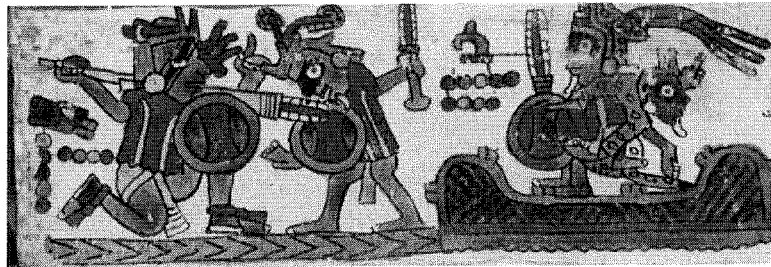


Fig. 3. Codex Añute (Selden), p. 12-I.

4. Ceremonial speech

As pictography does not have a direct, immediate relation with language, how is it read? Several early colonial manuscripts, such as the

famous Codex Mendoza, contain glosses and comments in Nahuatl and/or Spanish that clarify the meaning of scenes and provide us with a basis to identify and read individual signs (cf. Nowotny 1959). Often it is possible to find the corresponding terms in Dzaha Dzauí, either directly or by comparing the entries in Molina's Nahuatl dictionary with the corresponding ones in Alvarado's work. But the written alphabetic texts in the codices were generally generated in the highly determined (if not stressful) context of a Spanish person enquiring about what the native pictures contained, rather than in the free context of original oral performance.

As for the historical codices of Ñuu Dzauí, we observe that the contents are of a dynastic nature (creation of the royal lineage, deeds of mighty kings and queens, genealogy of the ruling family). In the Classic Maya area similar statements occur as inscriptions on *steles* and important buildings in the ceremonial centre. Apparently these texts were communicated to an audience as public reading, story-telling or dramatic performance during special ceremonial occasions. In fact, historiography itself may be considered part of a ritual act of commemoration: consequently it was imbued with religious thought and moral values.

We are well informed about the special language used on such occasions, not only in the case of the Maya and the Aztecs, but also in the case of Ñuu Dzauí. Mesoamerican peoples in general used a ceremonial or reverential language, characterized first and foremost by parallelisms and metaphors, both in ritualised speeches or prayers and in sacred narratives (e.g. the Popol Vuh). Today in the Mixtec region this language is referred to by the Spanish term *parangón* and the Mixtec term *sahu* (*shahun*, *sahvi*, *dahvi* etc. depending on the dialect), which may be translated as 'formal or ceremonial discourse'. Recently Ubaldo López García (2007) has documented and analysed the present usage of this *parangón* in his native village, Yutsa Tohon (Apoala) in the Mixteca Alta, registering many examples of flowery discourse.

Paradoxically, it was the Dominican monks in the sixteenth century who studied and employed this language as part of their crusade against the native religion. The usage of such traditional literary performance conventions effectively demonstrated to the audience that the preacher knew how to speak well and lend solemnity to his words. Moreover, the parallelisms and metaphors of this ceremonial language were suitable for translating Biblical texts and Christian prayers, which

often contain similar figures of speech. As an example we quote the prayer of St. Thomas, translated by friar Benito Hernández in his *Doctrina en Lengua Mixteca*, in the dialect of Yucu Ndaa (Tepozcolula), published in 1568:

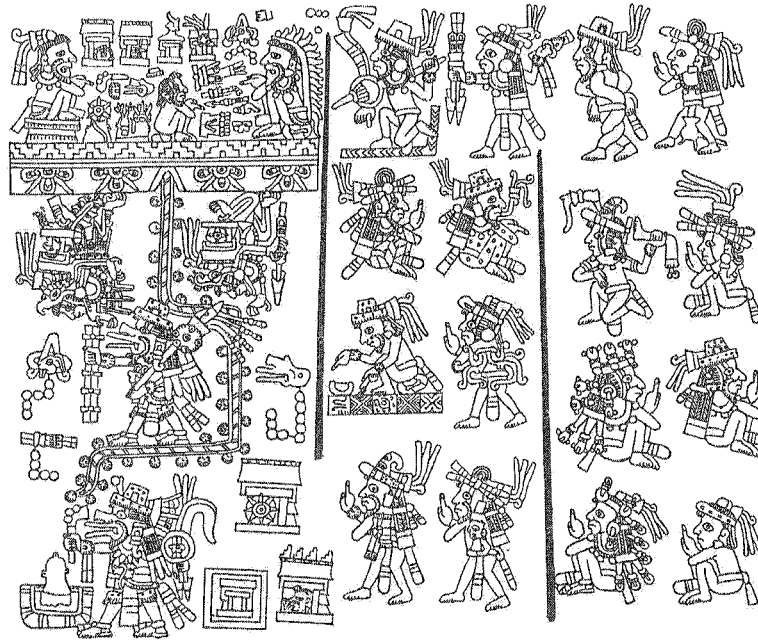
<p><i>Stoho ñuhu ndios, yya ndehe huaha, ndehe cuhui, huadza nisiyo sahani, huadza nicacuni, huadza niqhuini, da hua qhndehe, hua qhnaani, sadzehuini maani nisaandiyani dehendu angeles da yni andehui nicoocuisiya, nisaa sanuya, niniy tahuí tayuya, nisaqhendahuiya nanani, tayu maani.</i></p>	<p>Lord God (Ñuhu), Divine Lord, all good, almighty, you did not have a beginning, you were not born, you did not originate, and you will not end nor perish; you yourself created all the angels, now living in the heart of heaven, they put down their chests (burdens), received their seats and were counted before your countenance, your throne.</p>
<p><i>Da niquidzahuahani dehe nuu, ndehendusí, sa caa, sa ysi ñuuñayehui dehendu sa sini ñuhu dehendusí y[o]quidzatniñosi sa nicanadzanani, sa nicuhuindiyani, sa nidzasani ndehe y[o]quidzasi</i></p>	<p>And you made all forms, all types (of creatures) lying down, standing upright in the world, all that is needed: all perform their task as you have ordered them, as you wanted, as you distributed, all are working.</p>
<p><i>Sadzehuini maani (yoo tuhui tucuca) nicuhuini, dzahuatnaha nduta ñuhu yocana neendu nina canu yocay yosinonoo ñuuñayehui siy andehui; hua dzehuini duta ñuuñayehui yosito yosini ñadzaña.</i></p>	<p>And you yourself, (no one else) you are like the water of the sea that engulfs the whole globe, rises, runs, on earth and in heaven; But you are not just the same as the water of the earth that I see and observe.</p>

<i>niquidzahuaaha maani si ñadzaña</i>	You made for me
<i>ñaha cuiteyu tniño gracia,</i>	certainly the work of grace,
<i>tniño huaha, tniño ndoo,</i>	the good work, clean work,
<i>tniño nina, tniño yonahandichi</i>	the pure work, work of wisdom,
<i>yotoo, yocoo,</i>	it drips, it comes down,
<i>yosate, y[o]nditacoyo,</i>	it sprinkles, it flows,
<i>yonytahui nadzaña</i>	I receive it (as mercy)
<i>y[o]niytahui</i>	and so do
<i>tay y[o]sino quachi nanani</i>	those who serve you
<i>tay ysindaa ñuhuni</i>	those who honour your majesty.
<i>Maani stoho ñuhu</i>	From you, Lord God (Ñuhu),
<i>yocay yotoo</i>	originate and come down as drops
<i>nee cutu tniño huaha, tniño dzico,</i>	all the good works, virtuous works,
<i>da huadza niniyni maani,</i>	from nowhere did you receive them,
<i>sa dzehuini maani yondidzo</i>	you yourself sustain
<i>andehui ñuuñayehui</i>	heaven and earth
<i>yehe ndayani</i>	which are in your hands
<i>dzahuatnaha sa ndeqh dziy,</i>	as a small seed,
<i>ee sacuni</i>	a little thing.
<i>Yosicatahui ñadzaña</i>	I beg you as a favour
<i>dzatnooni dzayayni</i>	to illuminate and enlighten
<i>yini ñadzaña</i>	my heart
<i>sa tacusi ñadzaña,</i>	so that I may understand.
<i>Stoho ñuhu, dzacuitani</i>	Lord God (Ñuhu), disperse
<i>cuandahui sanaa,</i>	the shadows, the darkness,
<i>dzandachini, dzandoyo ñuhuni</i>	undo, destroy
<i>sanaa nicoocoho yini ñadzaña.</i>	the darkness that overtook my heart.

A special form of the parallelism is the *difrasismo* (hendiadys), which consists of a pair of nouns or verbs the combination of which creates a new meaning, such as *quevui cuiya* ‘the year, the day’, i.e. ‘time’, or *yuvui tayu* ‘the mat, the throne’, i.e. ‘the kingdom’ or ‘the nation’. As the two words in such a construction are pronounced with a special emphasis and pause in between, there is no tone sandhi, as we may observe in modern Mixtec (Sahin Sau of Chalcatongo). Compare:

<i>kʰù kʷiyá</i>	‘the day of the year’ (tone sandhi in the second word)
<i>kʰù, kʷiyà</i>	‘the day, the year’, i.e. ‘the time’ (without tone sandhi).

In the precolonial codices we find several examples of similar parallel constructions, represented by pairs of painted objects or figures. The largest number of these we find in the most ritual of all Mixtec manuscripts: Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), see Fig.4.⁵



Códice Vindobonensis 48

Fig. 4. Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), pg. 48 (reading order boustrophedon, from bottom right, to bottom left)

This principle operates, for example, in the list of titles of the main culture hero, the Whirlwind or Plumed Serpent, who is characterized as:

“Lord who carries jade, Lord who carries gold
(the difrasismo *dzeque dziñuhu*, “jewel, gold” is used to qualify the lord as the precious one, the one who gives richness and art).

5. Facsimile edition with commentary: Anders & Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 1992a. Here we employ the new nomenclature we proposed for the precolonial pictorial manuscripts (Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2004).

Lord who throws darts (i.e. the conqueror),
 Lord who carries shield and spear, and who is on the warpath
 (the difrasismo *tatnu yusa*, “spear, shield” is used to qualify the lord as a
 valiant warrior, the one who inspires courage)

Lord from whose heart the songs flow,
 Lord who is the painter of books, with the red and black paint
 (i.e. the one who inspires art and creativity).

Lord who carries in his heart the deity (*Nuhu*),
 Lord who carries in his heart the sacred bundle of sticks (symbolizing Au-
 thority and the Ancestors), ...
 (i.e. the pious one, the teacher of religious devotion)...

Lord (who transforms into) eagle,
 Lord (who transforms into) fire-serpent
 (The hendiadys *iya yaha iya yahui*, “Lord Eagle, Lord Fire-Serpent was
 translated in the 16th century as ‘nigromancer’, i.e. shaman)

Lord who carries the Temple of the Flayed One
 Lord who carries the Temple of the Sun
 (i.e. the one in charge of the important month rituals known as *Tlacaxipe-*
hualiztli and *Panquetzaliztli* in the Aztec language)”

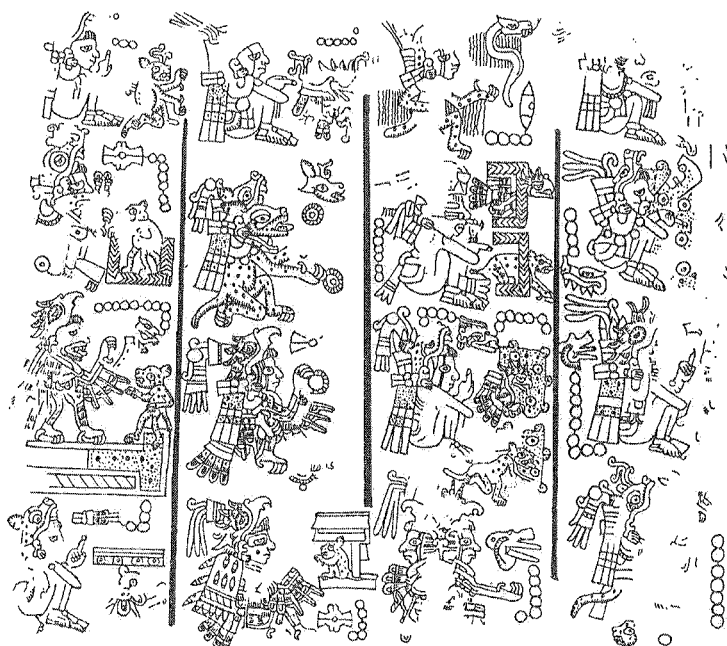
The same principle appears in a large list of individuals on pages 30-27
 of the same manuscript, see Fig.5. Their names are clearly ordered in
 pairs:

Lord 7 Rain ‘Flayed God’, ‘War Eagle, War Jaguar’
 Lord 12 Vulture ‘Jaguar’, ‘Night Eagle, Night Jaguar’

Lord 7 Wind, ‘Eagle that looks ahead and backward’
 Lord 7 Movement ‘Eagle of Flints’, ‘Owner of the Jaguar Temple’,

Lord 9 Movement ‘Eagle, holding Jade’,
 Lord 7 Deer, ‘Jaguar holding Jade’...

Lord 7 Movement ‘Jaguar’, ‘Jaguar on the Warpath’
 Lord 10 Lizard ‘Eagle’, ‘Jaguar in the Ball-court’



Códice Vindobonensis 29

Fig. 5. Codex Yuta T'noho (Vindobonensis), p. 29

Two women with the same calendar names and essentially the same given names appear next to each other (Codex Yuta T'noho, p. 27-1), see Fig.6:

Lady 13 Flower 'Quetzal bird of jade'

Lady 13 Flower 'Quetzal bird of jade'

But the birds that appear as their name signs are painted in different manners and the ladies wear different hairdoes, both typical for women: the first has the braids with coloured bands (*ndaha*), the second the red lock of hair on the forehead (*yoo tnaa*).⁶ This suggests that

6. Alvarado registers for the braiding of the hair by women: *yonaquiña ndaha idzi dziniña* (cabellos trenzar la mujer), for doing so with bands of cloth: *yodzucundi ndaha* and *yonaqnindi ndaha* (cinta tal poner con que se trenzan los cabellos), and specifies terms for the hairlocks on the forehead, *yoo tnaa* (copetillo de las muchachas en la frente) and *tetnaa* (cabellos copetillo de las muchachas en la frente). There seems to be

the reading of the list could be performed by following a basic repetitive pattern of parallel terms, while at the same time adding specific elaborations.



Fig. 6. Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 27

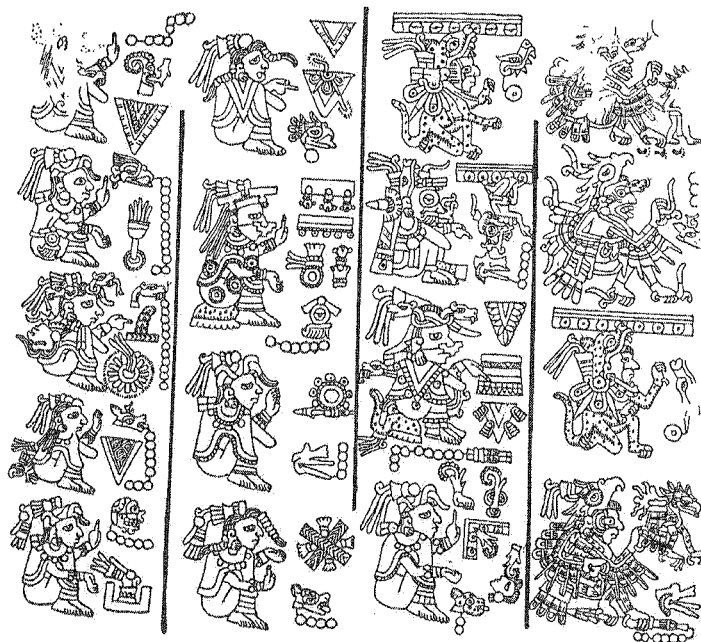
no difference as to age or marital status of either form of hairdo in this codex: as we see these different forms associated with the same women. Compare Lady 1 Eagle on p. 24 and p. 23, Lady 9 Grass on p. 24 and p. 25.

Among the ladies' given names we further find the parallel structure:

Lady 4 Dog 'Flower of War'

Lady 4 Wind 'Jade of Arrow'

Lady 6 Rain 'Flower of Jade, Flower of Gold, Band of Jade, Band of Gold'



Códice Vindobonensis 28

Fig. 7. Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 28

On p. 28-II (see Fig. 7), a Lady 2 Jaguar appears with a fourfold name, consisting of four variants of the basic element 'maize flower', i.e. *yoco*, a word that can also mean 'breath' and occurs in the names of Gods.⁷ *Nāha Yoco* (combining *yoco* with *nāha* 'female person') is a term for 'Virgin' and may express a generic title of this Lady. In her given name (or title) the maize flower occurs in combination with a hand, with three black beans, situated in a doubled sky and on the head of an up-

7. *Yoco* is paralleled with the Rain God on p. 24 of the same codex. Compare the Mixtec prayers from Guerrero, registered by Schultze Jena (1938)

ward looking maiden. Most of these combinations do not produce a self-evident iconical reading, which leads us to suspect that a phonetic reading is intended. This hypothesis gives the most likely result if we suppose that the added signs do not refer to nouns but to verbal stems (which would have been preceded by the present-tense prefix *yo-*):

- Maize flower with hand (= *ndaha*): *Yoco yondaha* ‘Spirit (or: Virgin) that gives satisfaction or healing’.
- Maize flower with beans (= *nduchi*): *Yoco yonduchi* ‘Spirit (or: Virgin) that purifies’.
- Maize flower that was born in Heaven: *Yoco nicacu ini Andevui* ‘Spirit that originates in the Heart of Heaven’.
- Maize flower with face (= *nana*): *Yoco yonana* ‘Spirit (or: Virgin) that sprouts’. An alternative reading for face or eye would be *nuu*, which as a verb (*yonuu*) in combination with the preceding sign would suggest the act of coming down from Heaven.

Another personage in this list, Lady 9 Reed, is an important Goddess, who intervened crucially in the life of the famous warlord and ruler Lord 8 Deer ‘Jaguar Claw’ (cf. Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2007a). She has a name consisting of a poncho-like garment known in Mexico as a *quechquemitl*, and a skirt, both decorated with flints. This *quechquemitl* we find in Mixtec as *dzico*, a word that can also mean ‘virtue, power’ while likely in the skirt it is the decorated rim or fringe that is intended, which in turn reads *huatu*, a word that can also mean ‘pleasure’ or ‘glory’. The terms *dzico* and *huatu* form a difrasismo for ‘good name’ and ‘glory of the Saints’. Here they appear as complementary parts of a given name ‘Power of Knives, Glory of Knives’.⁸

Added to this is yet another name: *quechquemitl* with shells, which likely is to be read as *Dzico Yee* ‘Virtue and Strength’, since *yee* means, on the one hand, ‘shell’ and on the other, ‘valiant, constant, strong’.

There are several ladies in Ñuu Dzaui history with *quechquemitl* names, probably to be read in this same way, as *dzico* ‘power, virtue’. The given name of Lady 9 Wind, see Fig.8, queen of Añute (Jaltepec), was also *Dzico Yuchi* (Quechquemitl of Flints, i.e. ‘Power of Knives’), probably in honour of the Goddess 9 Reed.

8. An Aztec parallel is the Goddess *Itzpapalotl Itzcueye*, “Obsidian Butterfly, She of the Skirt of Obsidian”, who, according to the Treatise of Ruiz de Alarcón (1953), represents the power of the arrowhead.

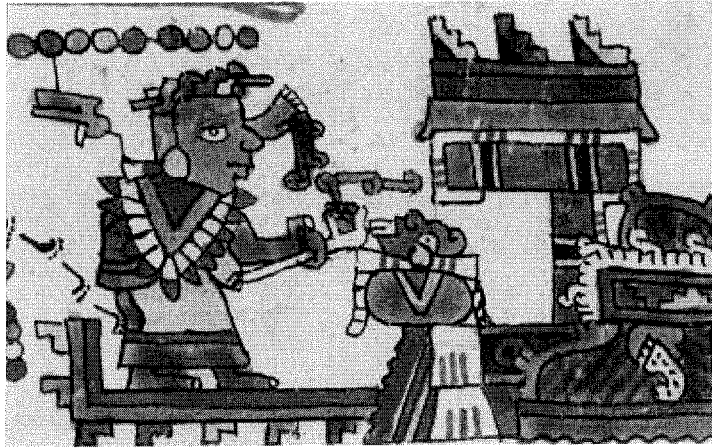


Fig. 8. Codex Añute (Selden), p. 5-III: Lady 9 Wind.

Her daughter, the famous princess 6 Monkey, see Fig.9, was called *Dzico Coo Yodzo* 'Power of the Plumed Serpent'.



Fig. 9. Codex Añute (Selden), p. 6-III: Lady 6 Monkey.

In both cases the additional element is situated on the rim of the garment, suggesting that actually the *difrasismo* (hendiadys) *Dzico Huatu* ‘Power and Glory’, of respectively the knives and the plumed serpent, is meant.⁹

There are alternative representations of both *dzico* and *huatu*. As *dzico* is also the term for a red tunic (known with the Nahuatl term *xicolli*), which is worn by male rulers, this tunic appears as the “male representation” of the same word. *Huatu* can also mean ‘braids’. We find both terms in these alternative representations in the given names of a brother and a sister: Lord 11 Flower ‘Tunic of Clouds’, i.e. *Dzico Huico* ‘Power of Clouds’, and Lady 5 Wind ‘Braids of Clouds’, i.e. *Huatu Huico* ‘Glory of Clouds’.¹⁰

Nearly half of the Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), namely pp. 22-5, contains a series of rituals celebrated for the foundation of village-states and dynasties.¹¹ These scenes start with sets of signs that seem to refer to elaborate discourses and ritual acts. The central topic of the ritual is explicitly indicated by a sign in the beginning, composed of a cradle (*dzoco*, also: ‘sanctuary’, and, as a verbal stem: ‘to dedicate’) and the frieze with the step-fret motif: *ñuu* ‘town’. The combination, both iconically and phonetically, refers to the foundation and dedication of towns.

In these lists of signs that represent the elaborate discourses for the foundation of settlements we encounter pairs of tunics (p. 22 and p. 18). The basic word painted here is obviously *dzico* ‘tunic’. In addition a lower band or rim is emphasized in the painting: we now understand that sign as *huatu*. In the first tunic the rim contains a frieze with the multicoloured step motif, the sign for *ñuu* ‘town’. The band or rim in the second tunic is marked as a frieze of disks, which is the pictorial convention for *aniñe* ‘palace’ (in Nahuatl: *tecpan*).¹² Thus, the combination refers to the power and the glory of cities and palaces. The second tunic has cords of jade, adding the adjective “precious”. Furthermore it is multicoloured and striped, a motif that usually refers to rock

9. See Codex Añute (Selden), p. 5-IV and p. 6-I (facsimile edition and commentary: Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2007b).

10. See Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nu (Bodley), p. 30-III (photographic reproduction with commentary: Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2005).

11. See Anders & Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 1992a and Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2007a.

12. The town’s palace is glossed ‘aniñe’ on the first page of the Codex of Yanhuitlan (Sepúlveda y Herrera 1994, lam II). Batalla Rosado (1997) has identified the *tecpan* glyph.

(*cavua, toto*) and therefore may allude here to the expression *yehe toto*, which means “orderly”. Simultaneously the pairing of a “normal” tunic with a “rocky” tunic is a symbolic reference to the two successive “peoples” or rather social orders of Ñuu Dzau: the “normal” Lords, proceeding from Yuta Tnoho (Apoala), and their mythic predecessors, the Stone Men, who turned into stone at the first sunrise of the new epoch. Other paired signs in this context are:

- “pulque (*ndedzi*) and chocolate (*dzehua*)”,
- “altar (*chiyo*) and pyramid staircase (*ndiyo*)”,
- “blood and heart” (*neñe ini*, a difrasismo for ‘child’, ‘kinship’ and ‘sustenance’),
- “arrows, spear thrower, and shield” (*nduvua cusi yusa*, a general expression for ‘fighting forces’).

In these and several other cases the ordering of the signs is clearly in pairs and therefore may be interpreted as the representation of the parallelisms of ceremonial speech.¹³

In scenes in Codex Yuta Tnoho, see Fig.10, – as well as elsewhere in pre-colonial iconography – we find also the sign that may represent precisely the concept of ceremonial discourse: it consists of four volutes (which denote ‘speaking’), in four different colours (referring to the four directions), bound together. We may reconstruct its meaning as ‘speaking to the four directions’ or ‘ritual speech’, being used as a general sign for ‘ritual’ or ‘fiesta’ (*huico*). On an early colonial carved stone from the Dominican convent of Cuilapan, the same sign appears to designate specific Mixtec “months” or rather twenty-day periods, named after specific rituals. The fact that this sign is based on that for ‘word’ suggests a connotation of the synonymous difrasismos *huidzo dzaha* and *huidzo sahu* ‘word of the lord(s), law’. In colonial times these expressions came to denote ‘preaching, doctrine’, while on the other hand *tay yocaha huico* ‘(the) man who speaks the feast’, came to designate an ‘*idólatra*’. The sign of the four bound volutes occurs prominently in the sequence of foundation rituals that occupy a significant part of Codex Yuta Tnoho. We find it combined with wood and rubber balls, to be burned as offerings, and with an ear being pierced by a bone perforator, a sign of self-sacrifice (pp. 22, 17). It also

13. Codex Añute (Selden), p. 3, contains a similar constructed scene, which seems to be a ceremonial discourse in the context of an enthronement ritual (Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2007b).

appears together with the signs for 'deity' (*Nuhu*) and for a sacred bundle of sticks (pp. 18, 17).

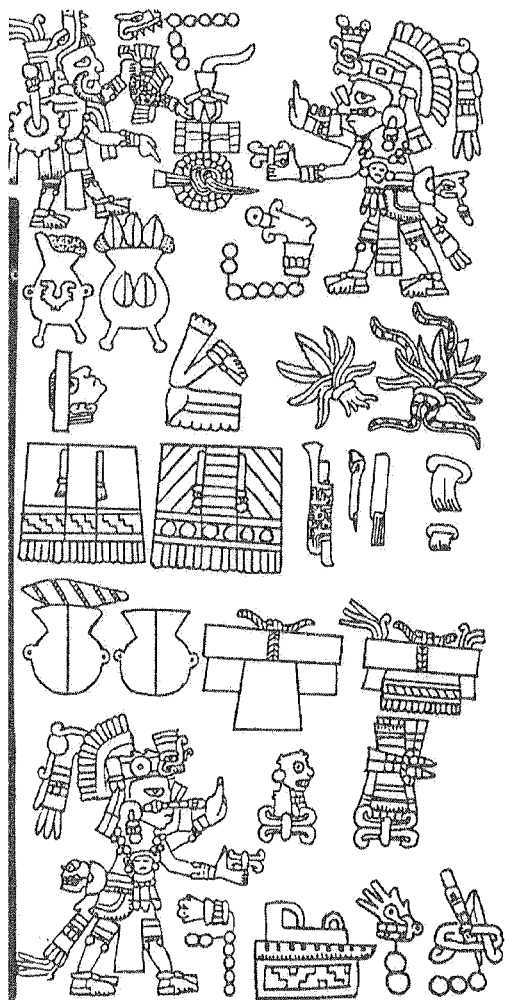


Fig.10. Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 18: beginning of the foundation ritual (reading order: from bottom to top).

Another, more indirect but illustrative reference to the special ceremonial speech may be found in the same sequence of images. After the reference to a ball game we find the sign of a mouth spitting out dark

powdered stuff with balls of down, followed by the combination of a split stick and a banner. The mouth with dark powder, we propose, may be read as *yaa* 'ashes', used to represent the homonym *yaa* 'music, song'. The feathers of the down ball are used, for example, to consecrate sacrificial victims.¹⁴ We therefore interpret them in Dzaha Dzaui as *ii* 'delicate, sacred' or *huii* 'soft, nice, honourable'. The combination *yaa huii* is mentioned by Alvarado as 'sweet and soft song' (Spanish: *dulce y suave canto*). The split decorated stick may be read as the word *dzee*, verbal stem of 'to split' (Spanish: *hender, tajar*), but also, as an adjective, meaning 'happy' and 'peaceful'. The word for banner is *huayu*, which also means 'elegant, nice, graceful', especially in combinations with 'speaking' or 'singing': to speak elegantly is *yocaha huii*, *yocaha huayu*. Consequently we read this whole sequence (*yaa huii – dzee – huayu*) as a reference to sweet, happy and elegant songs.

5. Terminology for ancient activities and artefacts

Part of the foundation rituals is dedicated to the preparation of pulque, the alcoholic beverage made from the juice of the agave or maguey plant (pp. 22, 20, 13). This passage in the text follows the phrase on nice speech discussed above and starts with a general opening statement referring to "the thirteen rosettes, the rosettes of bound grass", which are similar to the present-day wreaths of the *cucharilla* plant (*tiyeye* in Alvarado, *chichi* in Chalcatongo today), made to decorate altars, churches and arches at festive occasions.

As shown in Fig.11, there are two walking personages: an opossum (*tlacuache*) and a decapitated woman who is dressed as Lady 9 Reed in a *huipil* 'long dress' and a skirt decorated with flint knives. Both are carrying two bowls (*jícaras*) in their hands topped with flint knives. They proceed towards three maguey plants, the first of which has a human face and a hand, making the gesture of lamentation or woe, the second has green and black leaves and in the third a decapitated man is seated.

14. See Codex Vaticanus A, f 54v (facsimile edition with commentary: Anders and Jansen 1996).

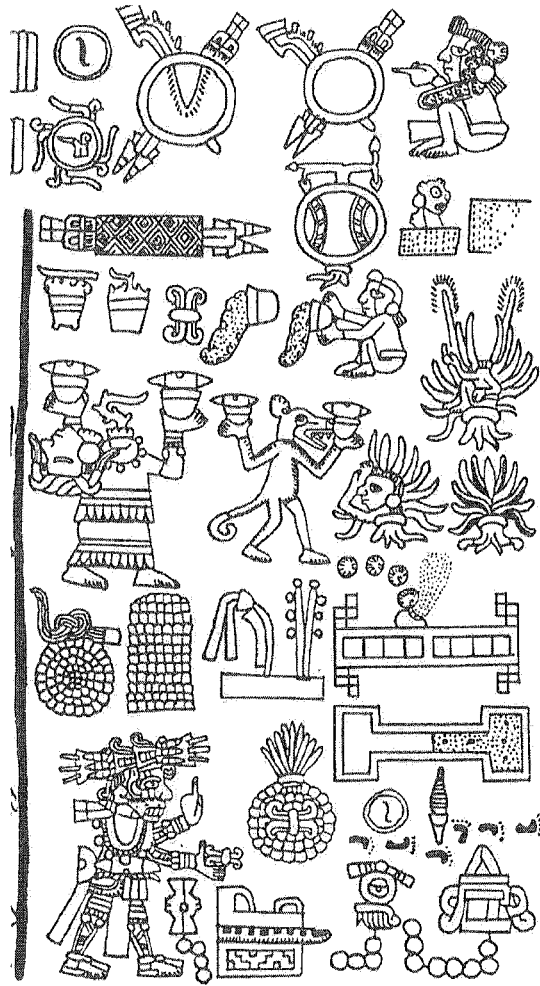


Fig.11. Codex Yuta T'noho (Vindobonensis), p. 20: the cutting and scraping of the maguey plants in the context of a ceremonial discourse during the foundation ritual, (reading order: boustrophedon, from bottom to top).

The scene becomes understandable if we compare it with present day oral traditions.¹⁵

15. We thank Mrs. Rosa Pilar Jiménez Jiménez, Mr. Felipe Pérez Cruz and Mr. Isauro Nicolás Jiménez, all experienced maguey cultivators from Ñuu Ndeya (Chalcatongo), for their orientation and explanation, provided in Sahin Sau.

Onde anaha shraan, tu jiniyo na kuia, na k̄u nindukoo Iha Nducha Kuijin, nd̄iȳ tatan̄uuyo, nd̄iȳ nanauyo nikajini ja nikatava, nikasha nducha kuijin ja yoo onde vina, yoo ndas̄ kuia ja yoo nducha kuijin.

Very far in the past, we don't know in which time (which year, which day), Lord Pulque was seated (established himself), our defunct grandfathers, our defunct grandmothers knew how to make and create the pulque that exists until today, since immemorial times there is pulque.

Tu ni in̄ n̄uu, teyu, ja katava nducha kuijin, ja kuu saha nducha kuijin. Kanuu ndau nducha kuijin ja kuu nducha kuijin jaa.

There is no other country (place, throne), where people know how to make pulque, how to make new pulque. The chinastle (mother pulque) is essential to make new pulque.

Katahu yau te kañii j̄in yuchi yau, ja kuu yuchi maa yau.

People cut the maguey, and scrape it with the knife for the maguey, the special knife for the maguey.

Katahu yau nuu ninachitu yoo chi suan ndeya nducha kuijin te asuka j̄ihi.

They cut the maguey when it is full moon because so the pulque is more abundant and has better taste.

Ja kitahu yau kajantiun machete, yuchi, barreta luli, shi yunu ja yo punta shini ja kuu kuenta palanka.

For cutting the maguey they use a machete, a knife, a small barrette or pointed spade as lever.

T̄in̄ nuu yau yoo: sakuniyo yau isa, yau kuijin yau kuii, uan kakuu ja kajaha nducha kuijin.

There are several types of maguey: for example maguey of large leaves, white maguey, green maguey, these are the ones that give pulque.

Nducha kuijin yau kuii chi tu asu j̄ihi, chi nakuha shiko maa yau uan.

The pulque from the green maguey does not taste well, because it conserves the taste of the maguey plant itself.

Nuu nijaha ja niyisha kant̄i yutu te jaa ita yau, kakaya. Kayee ita yau.

When the plant is old, the quiote (stem) comes out with flowers, the cacayas, which are eaten.

Nuu nind̄h̄i nijaha ndushi te ichi maa yau nduku nikanduu.

When the plant finishes producing juice and dries up, it becomes just wood.

Toho yii tahu yau, suni maa toho yii sa-ii, nakuatu jiin yitzi, jani in yajin nducha kuijin nuu mesa Chuhchi, te nakuatu jiin nducha kuijin te chuhun tihii niii nuu yajin nducha kuijin, ja nakuatu jiin uan, te jiin maa ndishri ja kuu ii, ndrishri ndau, ndishri nuu, te nasketahan ni, te nakuatu jiin ndihii ndishri uan.

A man cuts the maguey, he also blesses it with a candle, places a gourd with pulque on the altar of the Saints, prays with the pulque, throws a little bit of salt into the gourd with pulque, with which he is praying, and on the same pulque that is being blessed, the chinastle (pulque madre), the original pulque, he mixes them and prays with all the pulque.

Ja kihin kisa-ii ndushi yau jiin ndau nducha kuijin, nakuatu te chihuhma jiin susiakutu, kayu yitzi numa, kuyaa niii, nducha ii, te koho in yajin nducha kuijin jiin maa Nuhu Ndehyu.

In order to bless the juice and the chinastle (mother pulque) he prays and incenses with copal, with a burning candle, salt, holy water, and he drinks a gourd (jícara) pulque with God Earth.

Nu tunu nducha ii yoo te jiin maa niii ni, te chiso cruz kuiko yuhu tindoho luli nducha kuijin uan.

If there is no holy water, then (he will do the blessing) just with salt, making the sign of the cross around the small jar of pulque.

Toho shii kuu ja jani yau, ndekiu jaha ndushi, tahan shian nahha janakiinto ndushi, te tahan añini janakiinto ndushi, ja kiu nuu nducha kuijin uan, nuu ninakihinto ndushi, te uan niito jiin yuchi maa yau, tava jaco yau, niito sandooto ini yau yau, suan ndukuhun maa ndushi.

The woman is the one who scrapes the maguey, all the days the maguey produces juice (aguamiel), each day in the early morning she goes to collect the maguey juice, and each late afternoon she goes to collect it, so that it is added to the pulque. When she collects the maguey juice, she scrapes the plant with the knife for the maguey, takes out the pulp of the maguey she scraped, cleans the hole in the maguey; so the juice accumulates there.

Tahan shian nahha te tahan añini ndiu ndushi nuu nducha kuijin, te ndeya nducha kuijin.

Each early morning and each late afternoon the maguey juice is added to the pulque so that the pulque becomes abundant.

Jahan ndau shrahanka, tihí ndau te chuhun ndushi nuu ndau te ndeya nducha kuijin, te kejaha kuyahu, kuenta uhun peso, ushi peso shi kuenta t̄ndoho, kuenta kíyí.

First goes the chinastle (mother pulque), a bit of it, and maguey juice is added to it, it becomes abundant and ferments; then it is sold for five, ten pesos or by jars, by vessels.

Tu kasnd̄ihí nd̄ishr̄í, kasndoho joo ja kuu ndau, te j̄iin ndau kanasaha nd̄ishr̄í jaa.

They don't finish all the pulque, they reserve some as chinastle (mother pulque), with which they can make new pulque.

Nuu nind̄ihí niñiito yau uan te jasu nuu yau yáu uan ja ma k̄tu nducha sau j̄iin mihi nuu ndushi, te koo jako ndushi, ma kuuka k̄tu nuu nducha kuijin chi st̄u nd̄ishr̄í uan.

When she finished with scraping the maguey, she covers the hole in the plant so that rain water does not enter in the juice, nor filth, which would spoil the pulque.

Kasu j̄iin sahma ndoo, te s̄iki sahma kasu j̄iin plastico, uan te kainto ndaha maa yáu s̄iki sahma j̄iin plastico ja ma ndeche jinaha.

She covers it with a clean piece of cloth, and with plastic on top of that, and she puts some maguey leaves on top of the cloth and the plastic so that the wind does not carry them off.

Suni ja ma kihin jako kikoho ndushi, chi shraan t̄int̄-ini jako koho ndushi.

Also in order that the opossum (*tlacuache*) does not drink the maguey juice because the opossum really likes to drink the juice.

Remembering how the codex scenes represent the parallelisms of ceremonial speech, we interpret the two walking figures as a double reference to one individual, who proceeds towards the maguey plants with bowls and knives. The knife in this context is most probably the implement (still known as *yuchi* 'knife') used for cutting and scraping the maguey (Spanish: *raspar el maguey*) in order to extract the juice, aguamiel, for preparing the alcoholic beverage pulque (see also Mak 1977; Concuera de Mancera 1997).

Interestingly enough, the shape of the special knife used for scraping the maguey resembles the crescent form of the Andean *tumi*. A similarly shaped copper artefact appears in an archaeological context

at the Mixtec coast and indicates the introduction of metallurgy through trade from the South during Postclassic times.

There are different types of maguey that can be used to this effect, likely represented by the three magueys in the codex. With alarm (sign of lamentation) they await what is going to happen to them: the cutting and scraping (*yotahui*) is represented as a decapitation.

The opossum, who is known in sacred stories as the animal that brought pulque to the world, walks in front.¹⁶ We may read this animal as a symbolic representation of the man who is going to cut the maguey. Behind him comes a woman: she is painted as being decapitated herself, but in this context we prefer to read this image as a pictorial combination of an individual and the act of decapitation, i.e. as the person (likely indeed a woman) who is going to decapitate the maguey. Logically she is dedicated to Lady 9 Reed, the Goddess who represents the power of the knives. Reading this in the context of the preparation of pulque, we understand that the subjects of the actions are paralleled as “the opossum man who is going to bring pulque to the world (by cutting the maguey) and the woman dedicated to Lady 9 Reed, who is going to decapitate, i.e. scrape the maguey”.

The Divine Patron or Essence of the maguey is another Goddess, known as Mayahuel to the Nahuas and represented in the Teoamoxtli Group (Borgia Group) as seated on (ruling over) the maguey plant, an image that connects her with the contemporary veneration of the *Virgen de los Remedios* ‘Virgin of the Remedies’, who also manifested herself on a maguey and is the Patron of the process of preparing pulque. This identification (part of a much wider and complex religious interaction and mutual translation process, referred to as “syncretism”) goes back to early colonial times.

Nuu ndaha yau ndukoo Iha S̄h̄i Yau.

On the leaf of the maguey is seated the Lady of the Maguey [*the Virgen de Los Remedios*].

Viko Iha S̄h̄i de los Remedios kuu maa k̄iu una yoo diciembre te suni k̄iu uan kuu viko Iha S̄h̄i Juquila, viko Iha S̄h̄i de los Remedios kasaha nuu Yucha Naichi, N̄uu Ndeya, te viko Iha S̄h̄i Juquila kuu maa N̄uu Santa María Juquila.

16. See Van der Loo 1987: 157 ff. and 179 ff. A parallel scene is found in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 3 (facsimile edition with commentary: Anders & Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 1992b).

The feast of the *Virgen de los Remedios* is the 8th of December, which is also the day of the feast of the Virgin of Juquila; the feast of the *Virgen de los Remedios* is celebrated in the community of Chapultepec, Chalcatongo, and the feast of the Virgin de Juquila is in the village itself of Santa María Juquila.

Lady 9 Reed in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 28 has the di-agnostic face paint of Mayahuel (the lower half of her face is coloured blue).¹⁷ While her face paint connects her to the maguey plant; the knives in her name or title identify her specifically as the Patron (or power) of the knife that cuts the maguey.

Still today the diverse acts of pulque production are imbued with religious meaning:

Ja tahu yau kahanyo, kakanyo nuu maa Nuhu Ndehyu nakuaha ja kuu kitahuyo yau chi maa Nuhu Ndehyu kuu jitoho ndihi ja yoo nuu nuyiu yaha.

For cutting the maguey we speak and ask to God Earth, so that he may give us permission to cut the maguey, because God Earth is the lord of all that exists in this world.

Iha Sñhi de los Remedios kuu jitoho maa yau suni.

Also to the *Virgen de los Remedios*, who is the Patron of the maguey.

Nakuatuyo:

*'Kuahani, Nuhu Nehyu,
sehe ndahu sehe keeni,
nichaana nuu iyaani,
nuu iyaa seheni maa yau,
veina vestujina seheni ja kuu maa yau.
Ma kiti-inini nuuna te kuahani permisú,
ja tahuna seheni yau yaha
nakuaha joo ndushi ja kuu Iha Ndišhi.
Iha Sñhi de los Remedios,
San Cristobal, San Cristina, Santo Lugar.'*

17. See for example Codex Mictlan (Laud), p. 16, and Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 68 (facsimile editions with commentaries: Anders & Jansen 1994; Anders & Jansen & Reyes García 1993). The iconography reproduces the link of Mayahuel with the Goddess of Water, Chalchiuhtlicue (see also Loo *op. cit.*).

We pray:
 'God Earth give permission,
 [to me] your poor and miserable child,
 I came before you,
 where you are,
 where your sun, the maguey, is;
 I come to hurt your son the maguey,
 don't become angry with me and give me permission
 to cut your son, this maguey,
 so that he gives juice
 so that Lord Pulque is made.
Virgen de los Remedios,
 San Cristobal, San Cristina, Santo Lugar.'

The Earth God, *Ñuhu Ndehyu*, is the present-day manifestation of the *Ñuhu*, a general concept of divine power, mentioned in Alvarado's vocabulary as "Dios", and represented in the Mixtec codices as a red stony figure. Today this being is invoked as the trinity of "San Cristobal, San Cristina, Santo Lugar", present throughout the landscape and the epitome of Nature as a superhuman force. The maguey plants are explicitly defined as children of the Earth God.



Fig.12. Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 25: the fermentation of pulque.

In Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 25, we see a scene of drinking of newly made pulque. The opening scene consists of strips of land with maguey plants and a pulque jar. Then two ladies, both dedicated to the Maguey Goddess, serve pulque to a whole group of primordial personages. The maguey plants are cut – we observe how they are hollowed out in order to extract their juice. A correct detail is that the lower maguey leaves (*ndaha yavui*, in Spanish called *penca de maguey*) are cut off to facilitate approach by the cutter / scraper. The pulque jar is guarded by divine and dangerous powers (represented by coiling snakes). Pulque is rising (fermenting), and in it is the face of the maguey goddess. The face itself also is to be read as the verb *yonana* ‘to sprout, rise’. The religious element is present until today: maguey juice is poured on a remainder of earlier made pulque, known as *ndau* in Chalcatongo, which is translated with the loan word from Nahuatl *chinastle* or in Spanish as *pulque madre*. The mixture is left to ferment under or next to the house altar.

These actions parallel the ritual character of the scene in the codex, which finishes with a priest spilling white liquid from a bowl, after which a reddish-brown liquid with dots is spilled as well. The sign for ritual (speaking to the four directions) is given, followed by a bowl of blood and a bowl of white liquid topped with a maguey leaf. Given the presence of maguey plants, the white liquid has to be pulque (*nducha kuijin* ‘white water’ in Chalcatongo today). The reddish, dotted variant may be the maguey juice or a derived drink such as *tepache*. The bowl of blood reminds us of the above-mentioned Mixtec and Mesoamerican metaphor in which blood is part of sustenance (*neñe imi*).

Nducha kuijin kuu in nducha kanuu, chi kajihī ñayiu nuu kasatiun, sa kuniyo nuu kachihī itu, shi natiun ndaku.

Pulque is an important drink, because people drink it when they are working, for example when they are planting the fields or doing similar work.

Nu kinakana suni kanuu nducha kuijin ja kihin koho maa Ñuhu Ndehyu kihin in t̄ndoho.

When they are going to do a cleansing ritual, pulque is also important, it goes for God Earth to drink, there goes a jar.

Nuu yahu kuu ja kashiko kuaha nducha kuijin k̄u yahu yaha

In the market place it is the case that a lot of pulque is sold, on market days.

Ja kani nducha kuaha kajantiun in t̄indoho kahnu nducha kuijin jiin panela, shraanka nduha panela ini k̄is̄i nducha nijiso te suan nducha panela uan

In order to prepare *tepache* they use a big jar of pulque with *panela*; first they boil the *panela* in a large cooking vessel with water and so the *panela* is dissolved.

Toho s̄ih̄i ja jani nducha kuaha kichiñuhma nuu kundii k̄is̄i nducha kuaha, chih̄uhma jiin susiakutu te kati nd̄ishri nuu N̄uhu Ndehyu, sakuaha nakee vaha nducha kuaha, te suni ja ma tahu maa k̄is̄i uan.

The lady who prepares the *tepache* will incense the place where the vessel with *tepache* is placed, she incenses with copal and sprinkles *aguardiente* before the Earth God so that the *tepache* may result well and so that the vessel of the *tepache* will not break.

Nuu nijiso nducha panela te chuhun ini k̄is̄i nuu kuu nducha kuaha, uana te chuhun in t̄indoho kahnu nducha kuijin nuu nducha panela, uana te kundihu yuhu jiin in sahma jaa, kundii uni k̄u te nduu nducha kuaha.

When the water with *panela* has boiled, it is poured into the vessel in which the *tepache* is going to be made. Then a big jar of pulque is poured on to the water with *panela*, the vessel is closed off with a new piece of cloth: it will stand there for three days and so (by fermenting) it becomes *tepache*.

Pulque is of great cultural historical significance and remained so in colonial times, be it under different circumstances (Concuera 1997). It became part of the tremendous wave of alcoholism that pervaded the region together with colonialism and kept it in its grip until very recently, machismo and domestic violence being directly related phenomena. Nowadays new beverages are introduced as hallmarks of neo-colonial consumption patterns.

Vina tuka kajih̄i shraan nducha kuijin. Joonika kajih̄i, tuka kajantiun nducha kuijin, chi vina kajih̄ika refrescu jiin cerveza.

Nowadays people do not drink much pulque any more. They only drink a little, and do not occupy themselves with pulque any more, because nowadays they drink more soft drinks and beer.



Fig.13. Scraping the maguey, Chalcatongo.

6. Concluding remarks

The examples discussed above show how Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) pictorial manuscripts contain many specific terms of the Ñuu Dzau cultural vocabulary, as well as the typical parallel structures and metaphors of the ceremonial speech, reported as the “lordly language” by Friar Antonio de los Reyes. This lends support to the hypothesis that the codices were read, i.e. taken as the basis (script, story-line) for a declamatory performance in a ritual setting. The use of a special ceremonial “lordly” language conveys the notion that the terms were codified by others in a (sacred) past. Just like the other ritual acts, these wordings include a moral reference, to which the participants commit themselves openly by their very act of participating.¹⁸ The rituals and the corresponding ceremonial speech are therefore appropriate to mark the crucial moments that articulate and construct social life.

The structure of this language, in combination with specific terms from the cultural vocabulary, present in colonial works as well as in oral traditions, helps us to read and understand ancient pictography.

18. See the insightful studies by Rappaport (1999), and Keane (in Duranti 2004).

On the other hand, reconnecting codices and other historical texts of profound contents to on-going traditions and oral literature not only evidences long-term cultural continuity, but also fosters memory and identity.

This cultural continuity is an obligatory reference for the study of native works in a specific cultural tradition, be it in the past or the present. As such, it permits us to transcend the extremely limited and fragmentary character of archaeological remains, as well as the bias and time-bounded nature of historical documents by connecting the data from these sources to culture as an alive, dynamic, rich and often unpredictable process, with its many details, its own “logic” and its internal human drama and contradictions. But cultural continuity should not just be taken as a reservoir of illustrative data for putting flesh on the skeletons of the past, nor for suggesting interpretations of otherwise enigmatic aspects of archaeological artefacts or monuments. Cultural continuity, in the first place, imposes a need on scholars to take into account the very presence and co-evalness of existing peoples as subjects (cf. Fabian 1983).

In Mexico, as elsewhere in the Americas, the crucial point of reference in studies of the native languages and cultural histories is the European colonial invasion. This incisive and traumatic experience created a marked difference between (a) the descendants of the colonizing groups, (b) the indigenous peoples, who still remain in a subjugated, exploited situation, and (c) other subaltern segments of society. The historical *conquista* is not a closed chapter of the past, but an “open vein” in present-day processes of globalisation, or rather neo-colonialism, and the pervasive internal colonialism instigated and maintained by the dominant westernised / westernising strata inside the country itself, often in combination with nationalist ideologies. As a consequence, indigenous peoples continue to be victims of marginalisation, discrimination, social injustice, and territorial-cultural loss. At the same time the colonial structures, points of view, and conceptualisations still haunt collective memory on both sides of the ocean and influence present-day discourse, thought and scholarly practice.

From the Spanish chroniclers and missionaries in the 16th century up to modern archaeology, (ethno)history, anthropology and linguistics, the interpretive paradigms have always been “Western”. This has obscured understanding in several aspects. Until very recently, for example, it did not occur to investigators that the death imagery in

Mesoamerican cultures might be related to ancestor cult (hardly present in Western worldview) instead of some macabre “fascination with death and – of course – human sacrifice”. In a more general sense, Western investigators tend to see Mesoamerican religion in terms of theory and dogma, more than as living experience, and so tend to stress dichotomies, which may not always be relevant. It is very “Western” to differentiate, for example, between the physical and the metaphysical realms, which were closely connected as complementary if not identical in Mesoamerican thought. The God of Rain or rather “Lord Rain”, is rain itself, thus a qualification as “supernatural” is alien to the cultural context. A translation as “superhuman” may be a better reflection of Mesoamerican mentality.

After five centuries of colonialism, indigenous society shows resilience, innovation and growth. The past decades have shown an impressive rise in the consciousness and political activity of the peoples themselves, as well as in international attention, resulting, for example, in the adoption of a *Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples* by the General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation (New York, 2007).¹⁹

Passing part of our lives in the Ñuu Dzau region, we, the present authors, are impressed by the agency of the native communities themselves. Being forgotten or hardly given attention in government policies, the inhabitants have realised an economic boom through their own hard work, be it locally in community projects with an unceasing search for funds and support, or, in a wider context, by conquering job opportunities abroad, e.g. through the hardships of national and trans-national migration. Several decades ago the general atmosphere of the region was very depressing, nowadays we see major construction activity in many places, while newly founded schools offer advanced education programs and a better communication is facilitated through paved roads and the introduction of computers, internet etc.

19. Obviously there are many studies and different reflections on this topic, loosely referred to as the body of Postcolonial Theory. We limit ourselves to mentioning some classic monographs that have specially inspired us: Memmi (1991), Wolf (1982), Lemaire (1986), and Bhabha (1994), as well as to the statements of the symposium ‘*La Visión India: tierra, cultura, lengua, derechos humanos*’ during the 46th International Congress of Americanists in Amsterdam, 1988 (Musiro 1989). See further our own articles on the subject (Pérez Jiménez & Jansen 1979, 2006).

However, given the recent past of ethnocide policies (*castellanización*) promoted and implemented by different governments, cultural awareness and emancipation are often still lagging far behind. Not being taught at school, nor being learned at home by the younger generation, the native languages are rapidly eroding and disappearing. Actually, most Mesoamerican languages are already extinct, but – misleadingly – keep appearing in the census, as their last speakers are still alive. There are a few well-meaning reinforcement projects but these remain often stuck in the experimental stage, suffering still from lack of means and real commitment (cf. Meyer & Maldonado Alvarado 2004).

In this context the documentation, study and positive appraisal of the languages and cultures in this region has strong social relevance and potential for education and emancipation purposes, providing a cultural dimension for sustainable development. Research is timely but, in order to avoid perpetuating intellectual colonialism, should progress in a participatory manner, including explicitly and respectfully the knowledge, views and interests of the communities themselves. At the same time, research should avoid the essentialist and traditionalist trap of idealizing the indigenous culture and so freezing or disorienting its internal development. In sum, research should contribute to decolonizing and humanizing memory on both sides of the ocean.

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